

Grossman, national chair, and Leonard Barrack, national finance chair, Democratic National Committee; California Lt. Gov. Gray Davis, Democratic candidate for Governor, and his wife, Sharon; Michael Nickolauson, father of Mikael E. Nickolauson, and Mark Walker, father of Benjamin A. Walker, whose sons died as a result of

a May 21 attack at Thurston High School in Springfield, OR; Larry Bentz, principal, Thurston High School; Jamon Kent, superintendent, Springfield Public Schools; Kipland P. Kinkel, who was charged with the attack; and Portland State University students Eddy and Oscar Gilson.

Remarks to the Presidential Scholars *June 15, 1998*

Thank you very much. Welcome to the White House. I want to thank Bruce Reed for his service, and I want to thank him for making a joke about how young he looks and saving me the trouble of doing it. [*Laughter*]

Secretary Shalala, Deputy Secretary of Education Smith, to the Commission on Presidential Scholars and its Chair, Stuart Moldaw, to the cosponsors, the corporate sponsors, as well as the families and teachers and friends of the scholars here today, and most of all to you scholars, welcome to the White House. I hope you have enjoyed the day so far. I want to begin by thanking the United States Marine Band, this year celebrating its 200th anniversary as the President's band, playing for you.

The Presidential Scholars Award dates back to 1964 when President Johnson signed an Executive order, and I quote, "to recognize the most precious resource of the United States—the brainpower of its young people." Today I look out across a group of young people whose brainpower could light up this entire city. Someday, many of you doubtless will light up this entire city. Already you have enriched your communities by your activities in music, art, athletics, and citizen service. I'm especially grateful to those of you who have helped to mentor or tutor children who need your help.

As you look ahead to further academic success, let me say that I very much hope you will continue to pursue other interests as well, including community service. And I hope you will become increasingly involved as citizens in the great issues of today and tomorrow.

We are going through a period of profound change. You are on the edge of a new century and a new millennium. We are very fortunate that this is such a good time for America. And

every day I get up and give thanks for the fact that we have the lowest crime rate in 25 years, the lowest unemployment rate in 28 years, the lowest welfare rolls in 29 years. We're about to have the first balanced budget and surplus in 29 years, the lowest inflation in 32 years. We have the smallest Federal Government in 35 years, the highest homeownership in history. Inequality among different classes of working people is going down, and millions of children have been lifted out of poverty in the last 5 years. I am grateful for that.

But in that kind of environment, where the American people feel great confidence and where your future looks so bright, it seems to me that as a people we have two different choices: We can do what people usually do in good times—we can relax and enjoy them; or we can do what we should do—we should recognize that things are changing dramatically in our country and in the world, that we still have enormous challenges facing us in this new century, and we should be bold and look ahead to the future, to your future, to the world your children will live in, and act now, when we have the prosperity, the security, and the confidence to act on the long-term challenges of the country. There are many.

Next year I believe we have to reform Social Security and Medicare so that when we baby boomers retire, we don't bankrupt our children and undermine our children's ability to raise our grandchildren. I believe we have to make our public schools the best in the world, just like our colleges and universities are now. I believe we have to deal with the growing problems of crime and violence among children and families. I think we still have economic challenges in the inner cities and isolated rural areas. I

believe we have to prove that we can grow the economy and improve the environment, not continue to destruct it. I believe we have serious challenges, long-term, if we want to be the world's leading force for peace and freedom in the world, as the recent nuclear tests in India and Pakistan indicate, as the continuing turmoil in Kosovo indicates, as all the ethnic and religious and racial strife in the rest of the world indicates.

So we have these big challenges. And I have been hammering and hammering and hammering these last several months, here with the Congress and out in the country, that we owe you—our generation owes you our best efforts to deal with the long-term challenges of the country in these good times, not simply to relax and enjoy them, because nothing like this lasts forever. It is an opportunity, an opportunity to relax or to move forward. I think we have to move forward.

I'd like to talk to you about one such issue today, because I think it is profoundly important to your future and to children coming along just behind you. And that is our obligation to curtail what has become a deadly epidemic of teenage smoking. In 1964, the very year President Johnson started the Presidential Scholars program—when, coincidentally, I was exactly your age, but unlike Bruce Reed, didn't win one—[laughter]—the U.S. Surgeon General presented the landmark report linking smoking and cancer. Today we're on the verge of making dramatic progress in our fight against teen smoking. We have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to pass comprehensive antismoking legislation that can save a million Americans from premature, painful, preventable deaths just over the next 5 years.

Senator McCain and others have brought to the floor a principled and bipartisan proposal to protect children from tobacco. It raises the price of cigarettes by \$1.10 a pack over the next 5 years, the single most important step we can take to reduce teen smoking. It imposes tough penalties on tobacco companies if youth smoking doesn't decline by two-thirds over the next decade. It gives the Food and Drug Administration full authority over tobacco products. It provides for a nationwide counteradvertising campaign for prevention, for smoking cessation programs, and tough enforcement measures to stop retailers from selling cigarettes to minors, something that is illegal now in all 50 States,

even though a huge percentage of people under 18 but over 13 have tried cigarettes. It provides assistance to the tobacco farmers who have done nothing wrong. It funds a major increase in health research at the National Institute of Health and the Centers for Disease Control. And it returns to States funds to reimburse them for the massive amount of money they have already spent in helping to deal with the effects of smoking-related diseases, to be spent on health care and child care.

The McCain bill began as the strongest anti-youth-smoking legislation in history; it has been made stronger still. In the past week it has gained momentum as members of both parties offered amendments to fight teen drug use and to provide for tax relief for low and middle income families. I don't see how any Senator can now stand in the way of a bill that fights drugs, cuts taxes, and protects young people from a habit that kills.

It's been almost exactly a year since the State attorneys general proposal for a settlement brought comprehensive legislation to our Congress, a month since the Senate began to consider the issue. I urge the Senate to act now. Every day the Senate delays plays into the hands of the tobacco industry, which wants desperately to kill this bill and which is spending millions and millions of dollars on an advertising campaign designed to convince the American people this is nothing more than a big government tax increase to create huge big government bureaucracies. It is absolutely false.

I just came back from California and Oregon, and I traveled around a lot in automobiles and had the chance to hear some of the advertising being run by the tobacco companies. And I thought to myself, it's not true, but it sounds good. They basically say, "Forget about the fact that we didn't tell the truth to the American people for years, about our efforts to recruit teenagers to smoke illegally, about our memorandum which called them replacement smokers. Forget about the fact that we covered up for years the fact that we knew that tobacco was addictive. Just channel your well-known hatred of Government and taxes against this bill."

And unfortunately, the Cancer Society, the Heart Association, the Lung Association, the people who stand with us on this legislation, don't have anything like the money that the tobacco companies have to put on ads that answer that.

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Those of us in politics know that unanswered ads can sometimes be fatal. Well, if they're fatal this year, they will be fatal to young children who continue to be seduced and sold illegally cigarettes that will shorten their lives.

Remember that every year smoking-related illnesses cause more deaths than AIDS, alcohol, drugs, car accidents, fires, and murders combined. This is an important thing to do. So I ask you all, remember that 3,000 young children start to smoke every day, illegally; 1,000 will have their lives shortened because of it. The delays must come to an end. I ask the American people to make their voices heard. I ask the United States Senate to think about the Presidential Scholars here and all the young people they represent and pass the McCain bill this week. [Applause] Thank you.

I know many of the scholars here feel just as strongly as I do. Patrick LaRochelle from Signal Mountain, Tennessee, has been running 4½ minute miles. I never did that. [Laughter] He would sooner put on lead shoes than smoke

a cigarette. Alex Blane, from Charlotte, North Carolina, has aunts and uncles and friends who have worked on tobacco farms. Yet every single one of them is adamant that smoking should be a habit young people never start.

So I ask all of you whose communities look up to you: Help your young friends take a stand against peer pressure; help them take responsibility for their health in every way. At the national level we can and must make it more difficult from cigarette companies to market to teens. But to really cure our country of this significant public health challenge, we need the help of parents and siblings, teachers and coaches, and role models like you. The 21st century will be the time of greatest opportunity in all human history. I want every American young person to be able to enjoy it to the fullest.

Congratulations, and God bless you. Good luck.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:40 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House.

Message to the Congress Transmitting a Report Required by the Ratification Resolution of the Chemical Weapons Convention

June 15, 1998

To the Congress of the United States:

Attached is a report to the Congress on cost-sharing arrangements, as required by Condition (4)(A) of the resolution of advice and consent to ratification of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on

Their Destruction, adopted by the Senate of the United States on April 24, 1997.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

The White House,
June 15, 1998.

Remarks on Signing the Bulletproof Vest Partnership Grant Act and the Care for Police Survivors Act

June 16, 1998

Captain, thank you very much for your remarks and even more for your service. I think it's fair to say that everyone in America followed the harrowing trail that you were part of just a few months ago and grieved the loss of those two troopers and the others who were killed. And we thank you for your presence here.

Thank you, Mr. Vice President, for all the work you've done over the last 5½ years. And thank you, Attorney General Reno, for doing a superb job of one of the things I asked you to do when we first talked about your becoming Attorney General, and that is being a genuine